

May 8, 2013

Prepared Statement of Congressman Richard Hudson on Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act before the House Armed Services Committee

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, I want to thank you and this Committee for the opportunity to share with you some of the priorities I hold for the upcoming year, of which I am here to emphasize on behalf of the Eighth District of North Carolina.

As a new Member of the House, I strongly support the call of the American people to reduce government spending and bring our staggering national debt under control. I firmly believe that our failure to do so is the single greatest threat to America's national security. As I have traveled around communities in North Carolina, people have consistently told me that restoring fiscal responsibility is their number one priority, and that they sent me to Washington to force the government to live within its means. Accordingly, I am committed to cutting spending, reducing the size of government, promoting economic growth, and putting our budget on a path to balance.

Today, I would like to discuss a number of things: namely, the challenges that we must face along with our allies and partners; the commitments we have made to our men and women in uniform, and the importance of ensuring accountability and transparency when trying to maintain a strong national defense in a tough budget environment.

Challenges Facing the United States

The past decade has taught us that many threats no longer come from traditional nations, but rather from determined groups of extremists who seek to wreak havoc on the American dream. We can never forget how the attacks of 9/11 changed the way America operates in the world and how we must be vigilant against any threats of terrorism.

While the War on Terror is an ongoing battle against evil, in most cases, states continue to pose the greatest threat to our national security whether through the sponsor of terrorist groups or outright provocation. A failure to exercise US diplomatic and military leadership means nuclear states like Iran and North Korea will be able to bully the international system. The US cannot stand idly by while rogue states continue to test, build, and refine their nuclear capabilities. We must be prepared to take all actions necessary to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and cannot afford the cost of failing to back up our claims.

Promises Made and Kept

North Carolina is fortunate to be home to over 700,000 proud veterans, and I am lucky to represent a District that has a strong military presence given its proximity to Fort Bragg. I continue to be involved with those communities most associated with Fort Bragg and have joined the Army Aviation and Special Operations Forces Caucus in order to keep up to date with the issues these units face on a daily basis.

I also just returned from a productive visit to the base and am proud to report on their fine work there on behalf of this great nation. As a member of the North Carolina delegation very concerned about Ft. Bragg's mission and their future, I look forward to working with the base to ensure that their priorities are met. Among these are a number of new centers including a skills sustainment course building for the Joint Special Operations Medical Training Center, an engineer training facility for the 1st Special Warfare Training Group, a language and a cultural center for the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

As the United States increases its Special Operations and Airborne operations tempo and presence, it is critically important that we support in depth training and techniques, an area where Ft. Bragg continues to excel. I look forward to working with you and this Committee to provide the necessary resources to ensure the utmost success for our dedicated men and women in uniform there.

America has made promises to the men and women who have made countless sacrifices for our nation, and we must guarantee those promises are kept. I will work tirelessly to ensure that these veterans are treated with the dignity and respect they have earned. Our men and women in uniform represent the best our nation has to offer, and I am proud to serve and support them in Congress as they serve our great country.

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, I have worked for and support the Transportation Security Administration's decision to offer less-invasive screening to members of the military who have sustained severe combat-related injuries. This update, which allows wounded warriors to keep their shoes, light jackets and hats on when undergoing screening at airport checkpoints, provided they contact TSA in advance of traveling, builds upon other changes promoted by the Homeland Security Committee.

Properly Budgeting for Strong National Defense

Finally, I would like to discuss the defense budget. In tough economic times it is critical that we hold every federal agency accountable for taxpayer dollars and the Department of Defense is no exception. I applaud the work of my colleagues **Congressmen Conaway and Andrews** who have long urged DOD to make financial management a priority within the department. Under the current budget environment, I think we can all agree that the DOD must be audit ready in order to make certain every dollar appropriated and spent is accounted for and used to its fullest potential.

With that said, it is important to remember that Defense spending represents approximately 19 percent of the federal budget, yet has been forced to absorb nearly half of the spending reductions occurring in the past two years. Given the defense community's already disproportionate contribution to deficit reduction, I encourage the committee to use all means necessary to certify that our military has the resources it needs to properly defend the United States and keep its citizens safe in the future. We must always ensure that our military's readiness is not compromised by an inability in Washington to properly set spending priorities.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak here today. I am eager to support your efforts to reduce the size of government, promote economic growth, and put our nation's budget on a path to balance in the near future.

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